

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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The Iowa Ornithologists' Union was organized at Ames, Iowa, February 23, 1923, for the study and protection of native birds and to promote fraternal relations among Iowa bird students.

The central design of the Union's official seal is the Eastern Goldfinch, designated State Bird of Iowa in 1933.

Publications of the Union: Mimeographed letters, 1923-1928; "The Bulletin," 1929-1930; "Iowa Bird Life," beginning 1931.

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## THUNDERSTORMS, WIND DIRECTION, AND GRACKLE FLIGHTS

By JOHN C. W. BLIESE

Biology Division  
Nebraska State Teachers College  
KEARNEY, NEBRASKA

In one of the few detailed studies dealing with Bronzed Grackle roosts and roosting flights, Lynds Jones (*The Oberlin Summer Grackle Roost*; *Wilson Bulletin*, Old Series 9 [15]: 37-56, 1897) made several interesting comments about the birds at Oberlin, Ohio. According to one of his observations, the Grackles in his vicinity left their feeding grounds early in order to fly to the roost before a thunderstorm struck, provided the storm arrived after four o'clock.

It was the pleasure of the writer to have studied the Grackle roosting problem at Ames, Iowa, from 1949 to 1952. Of the various thunderstorms to hit that area during those four years, several came between 4:00 p.m. and the usual time of arrival of the birds at the roost. Two such storms struck when the writer happened to be in the field, but on neither occasion did the birds respond as those at Oberlin responded.

The first storm in question occurred on August 25, 1951. Its effects were noted on the southwest flight, so called because of the direction from which the birds came. At 6:00 p.m., before any bird had arrived at the roost area, the sky was at least 95 percent cloudy, and a thunderstorm was in progress well to the south. Another storm was to the southwest and was approaching northeast Ames. It struck at 6:15 p.m. and with it came, in one large flock, an estimated 6,000 birds that had gathered in the trees on Elm Avenue, Hazel Avenue, and on the nearby streets several blocks southwest from the roost. Most of the birds were Grackles, but many Starlings were among them. These birds rushed to the trees on Northwestern Avenue, Seventh Street, and vicinity, one portion of the roost area. During the interval from 6:20 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., while the storm was in progress, an additional 700 birds arrived and settled in the same trees. The storm, which was mostly wind and had only a small amount of rain, was practically over at 6:30 p.m.

That the birds which had rushed in with the storm, but not ahead of it, were only those that were already present locally, was shown by the flight counts after the storm had passed. In successive 10-minute intervals, beginning with 6:30 p.m., the estimates were as follows: 200; 680; 14,700; 2,240; and 10. Thus approximately four times as many birds arrived after the storm as during it. These birds apparently did not leave their feeding grounds early in order to reach the roost in advance of the storm.

By way of comparison, on August 23, just two days prior to the storm, and with a sky about 50 to 60 per cent cloudy, the roosting flight had begun at 6:10 p.m. This was the same time that the 6,000 birds dashed in on August 25. The flight reached its peak at 6:50 p.m. and ended about 7:15 p.m., exactly as on the day of the storm.

On August 8, 1952, a storm's effect on the east flight of birds was observed. The storm apparently was chiefly in its development stage as it passed over the roost area. At 6:00 p.m. it caused only a mild sprinkle about five minutes in Ames, but lightning and thunder indicated considerably greater activity after it had passed farther east. During the 10-minute interval that began at 6:00 p.m., 30 Grackles and 40 Starlings came toward the roost area while it sprinkled. The next 10 minutes, however, brought an influx of 6,100 Grackles, 150 Starlings, and 10 Cowbirds. To all appearances the storm had stimulated the nearby birds to come to Ames the moment it struck them; but it had not

caused birds farther away to leave their feeding grounds earlier for a fairly normal flight followed the first rush. Approximately 7,500 Grackles, 1,650 Starlings, and 1,700 Cowbirds arrived between 6:30 and 7:20 p.m.

On at least 10 evenings precipitation in the form of sprinkles or mist, unrelated to violent convection storms, fell just before or during the passage of a flight. On no such occasion did the light rains have any apparent effect, but, as will be shown in detail elsewhere, other weather variables such as increased cloudiness and greater wind velocity caused the flights to come to roost somewhat earlier than usual.

Jones' studies in Ohio also led him to conclude that the numbers of birds to reach the Oberlin roost from a given direction were reduced if they had to face strong winds. Nevertheless, he found that one flight of birds did not respond in this manner, and he concluded that this group of birds was too well organized to be affected. Jones did not define what he meant by strong winds.

For evidence of the effect of wind direction on populations at Ames, the assumption was made that any given flight was largely, if not entirely, composed of the same group of birds day after day, at least after seasonal increments had stopped by mid-July. Unless weather conditions prevented some birds from coming to Ames, therefore, the numbers of birds observed on any two successive evenings should be roughly the same. If certain wind directions did prevent some birds from following the usual flight line, or caused others to join it, the data on two consecutive days should show the results.

Unfortunately no one flight of birds at Ames was observed frequently enough to get the evidence necessary to compare with Jones' observations. Winds from sharply different directions, and reasonably strong both ways, were never noted for the same flight on successive days. Nevertheless, some data that involved milder winds from contrasting directions on consecutive days were obtained and seem worthy of a summary. Wind velocities concerned here varied from 22 to 610 feet per minute, as measured with a Biram anemometer at shoulder level.

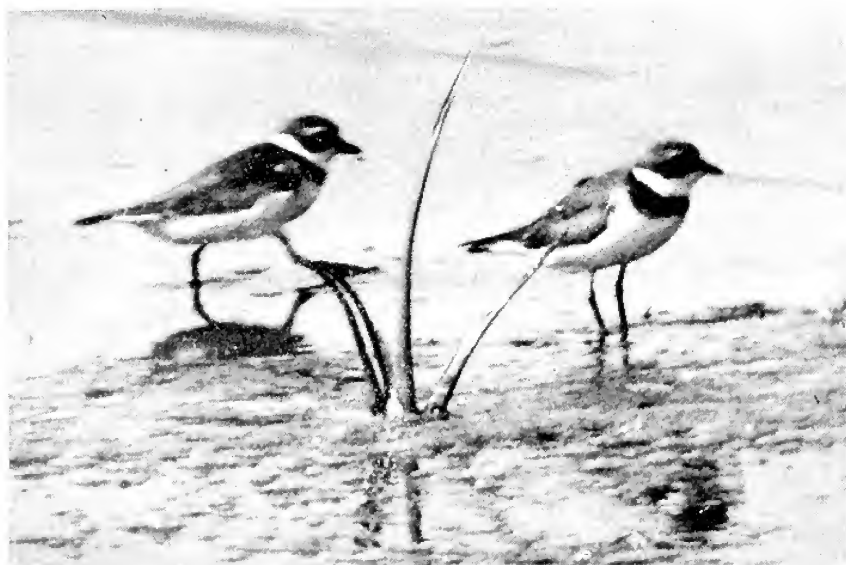
When facing head winds, or near head winds, as compared with winds of similar velocity from other directions on consecutive days, Grackle populations at Ames went up 2 times, down 4, and remained the same on 3 occasions. For Starlings and Cowbirds, which were always present with the Grackles, the respective data were 6,2,1 and 6,3,0.

Some data were also gathered when the wind came either from the rear or at right angles to the line of flight, as contrasted with winds from other directions on consecutive days. With tail winds, or near tail winds, population changes were as follows: Grackles—0,2,3; Starlings—0,5,0; and Cowbirds—1,3,1. Winds at right angles to the birds, on the other hand, were associated with the following population trends: Grackles—4,0,2; Starlings—3,2,1; and Cowbirds—2,3,1.

Taking everything into consideration, therefore, the limited data at Ames suggest that mild winds from directly ahead or from the side either tended to increase the number of birds coming to the roost, or to have no effect at all; and that tail winds of similar velocity either reduced them or did not affect them. Starlings and Cowbirds were more definite in their response than were the Grackles.

As mentioned before, these observations can not be compared with those made in Ohio. In the first place, Jones included no tabulations in his publication that could be of value here; and secondly, Jones based his conclusions on "strong" winds.





## SHORE-BIRDS AT AMANA LAKE, IOWA COUNTY

Upper photograph, Red-backed Sandpipers.

Lower photograph, Semipalmated Plovers.

The above photographs and those on the opposite page were taken by Fred W. Kent, on May 21, 1955. They were all taken through a 20x telescope by holding a small (35mm) reflex-type camera up to the eyepiece of the 'scope.

Fred says: "It is a rather tricky procedure, but now that it works so well I am making a base to hold both the scope and camera in line; even tried some of new fast color and it works, too. It is necessary to use a reflex-type camera in order to be sure of focus (done with 'scope) and field of view."

## ENGLISH THROUGH BINOCULARS

By MRS. W. C. DE LONG  
LAMONI, IOWA

Sitting at my desk one evening after school in September, 1953, while reading Emerson's poem, "The Tufted Titmouse," I glanced up to see the superintendent coming into the room to hand me a bulletin.

"Mr. Lorange," I said, "wouldn't it be wonderful if one could have access to a school bus and could have enough binoculars for students in one's classes so that one could take them to the woods and show them, first-hand, the wonders of nature?"

To my surprise he answered, "You may have the use of the school bus any time you want one, and as for the binoculars, I don't see why you can't have them. We buy microscopes for the science department, why not binoculars for the English department?"

And so the project called "English Through Binoculars" was started. The children were in the eighth grade at the time and several trips were taken during the school year of 1953-1954. These same children are in the ninth grade and the project has been continued.

One of the most interesting trips taken this year was on January 27, 1955, the coldest day on record for the month. The temperature was way below zero with 9 inches of snow on the ground. Seventeen students were transported in a school bus to my country home south of Lamoni, where they watched winter birds from a window for two hours. Because of the very cold weather and the deep snow, 11 different species came to the weather-vane feeding station and surrounding trees and put on a perfect show for the class.

As a result of the trip, a writing project was attempted. The project was to combine some of the facts they had learned from observation and use their imaginations to do some creative writing. I have selected one girl's theme to send to "Iowa Bird Life" because of its originality and creativeness.

The class became interested in the little Song Sparrow that came to the feeder. They did not realize that any sparrows existed except the English Sparrow. As a result research papers have been written on the subject, "What Is a Sparrow?" More field trips have been planned to see the Fox and the Harris's Sparrow. It is much easier to teach English to children when they can write about things they actually observe in the wide-open places.

### BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Notices were posted that, regardless of the weather, on January 7, 1955, "Birds of a Feather" would flock together for a performance to entertain the freshman English class. Seats were reserved inside the warm country home of Mrs. DeLong, their teacher. In spite of the sub-zero weather, the spectators arrived on time in the big yellow school bus. After they had removed their warm wraps, they were shown to their seats in the dining room in front of a large picture-window. Lunch was first served before the show began.

At 12 o'clock noon the curtains were drawn back and the show began. Outside every bird in the cast had his costume ready. The first stage setting was a tree decorated with suet. At the bottom of this tree was a feeder with weed seeds gleaned from clover seeds. The next setting was the feeding station on which the stage hands had placed everything appetizing to the performers. The feeder, a weather-vane type of feeder placed only a foot from the picture-window, turned with the direction of the wind. The last setting was at the multiflora rose hedge, not too far from the feeder. It made a perfect setting for the star of the show.

First on the program was the duet of the Junco and the Song Sparrow. The Junco was dressed in a black suit with a light gray vest while the Song

Sparrow wore light brown with brown striped accessories. Their song was a peppy, light number called "Suet Goes."

The next act was the Downy Woodpecker, dressed in a black and white clown suit with a jaunty red hat perched on the top of his head. He played the drums. As usual the Hairy Woodpecker, dressed in a costume to match the Downy, was late, but he made up for lost time for his horn-blowing beak was a sensation. The last on the stage before the intermission was the Nut-hatch. He wore a blue suit with a white front. His tumbling act proved to the audience why he is called the "upside-down bird."

During the intermission the teacher passed among the spectators and gave each one some delicious home-made divinity candy.

The second act of "Birds of a Feather" opened with the performance of two small Chickadees, the Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis of the bird world. They wore formal attire. Dean sang his chick-a-dee-dee-dee song while Jerry played on his two-tone whistle. To add a more dignified act the Flicker, with his suit of speckled black and brown, played on a hollow limb. His solo was very much enjoyed by the ladies. The Red-bellied Woodpecker, jealous of the Flicker, tried to win the hearts of the ladies, but all he could say was, "Chad, chad chad" as he came on the stage.

The final stage was by the multiflora rose hedge. The Cardinal, the star of the show, did a beautiful dance in the white snow. His costume was a bright scarlet with a black trim. He well deserved the honor of being the star, for his grace and color were outstanding. As the scene closed, all the birds gathered on the stage with their master of ceremonies, the Tufted Titmouse, to bid the audience farewell. The Tufted Titmouse with his peaked hat looked pleased with the performance. He should have, for it was a success.

The show was over, the curtains were drawn, and the freshman class once again piled into the large yellow school bus, and headed back to the Lamoni High School to write up the performance of "Birds of a Feather."

—LINDA OILER.

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## THE SIOUX CITY CONVENTION

By MRS. GEORGE CROSSLEY

Secy.-Treas., Iowa Ornithologists' Union

The Sioux City Bird Club was host to the 33rd annual meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, Saturday and Sunday, May 14 and 15, 1955. It was a tri-state convention, held jointly with the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union and the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union. All meetings and activities were scheduled at the Mayfair Hotel.

The morning session, at which W. E. Eigsti, president of the Nebraska Union presided, opened at 9:30 with a cordial welcome by Miss Gertrude Weaver, president of the host club, and response by our president, Dr. E. L. Kozicky. Dr. John C. W. Bliese, of the Nebraska State Teachers College, opened the program with a talk on "Some Experiences With Grackles." This was a detailed report of data collected in the field on roosting areas in Ames. It was observed that the birds preferred the large, dense, hard maples and American elms closely grouped. The time of flights, which reached a peak in July, was determined by the amount of cloudiness, time of year, and wind velocity. Dr. Bliese stated that these roosting sites were an economic problem in urban areas, and suggested selective cutting of trees as one solution to the problem.

"Preliminary Notes on the Nesting of the Pine Siskin in Eastern South Dakota," by Dr. Herbert Krause of Augustana College, was a statistical report on the early and recent published records of this bird. Dr. William F. Rapp, Jr. followed with his paper on "How the Amateur can Contribute to Ornithological Sciences." He stated that studies of populations, breeding birds,

migration, life histories, and bird-banding offer opportunities for observations from which much valuable information can be supplied by the amateur. Joseph J. Hickey's "A Guide to Bird Watching" was recommended as a reference in choosing and planning such studies.

Dr. O. S. Pettingill, Jr. of Wayne, Maine, gave a most interesting review of his "Experiences With Birds in the Falkland Islands." He described vividly the inclement weather—mild temperatures but constant strong winds. He stated that vegetation is limited to small herbaceous plants, small shrubs, lichens and mosses, much like the terrain on mountains above timberline; that birds are the dominant life as there are no amphibians, reptiles or native mammals. The inhabitants of the islands, British descendants, are a prosperous, wealthy, and sophisticated people whose chief economy is sheep-ranching and postage stamps. Opportunities for pictures are unlimited, according to Dr. Pettingill; however, there are the unusual problems in finding the subjects too close to the camera and the photographer overwhelmed with the spectacle of too many pictures available at the same instant.

After a brief intermission Dr. Gerald B. Spawn, of South Dakota State College, continued the program with "Winter Bird Observations near Brookings, South Dakota." He reported on the observations of students who noted variations in species and numbers of birds in the various habitats each winter over a period of seven years. Birds observed each year included Chickadee, Crow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Harry and Downy Woodpeckers, Pheasant, and Great Horned Owl. Those seen irregularly included Goldfinch, Tree Sparrow, Brown Creeper, Slate-colored Junco, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Starling, English and Song Sparrows, and Cardinal. The birds considered uncommon were Red-tailed Hawk, Magpie, Red-winged Blackbird, Screech Owl, Purple Finch, Winter Wren, Bald Eagle, Blue Jay and Mallard.

The morning program concluded with a report on "The Present Status of the Pinnated and Ruffed Grouse in Iowa" presented by Elden B. Stempel of the Iowa Conservation Commission. He stated that Pinnated Grouse or Prairie Chicken has declined rapidly since 1940 due to continued breaking up of our prairie lands, the natural habitat of the bird. In recent years Prairie Chickens have been reported in the vicinities of Emmetsburg, Cresco and Creston. Ruffed Grouse are limited to the northeastern area of the state.

J. O. Johnson, president of the South Dakota Ornithologists' Union, presided at the afternoon session, which opened with a series of brilliant colored slides on "Nests, Nestlings and Parent Birds," shown by Willis Hall of Yankton. Birds pictured were Mountain Bluebird, Water Ouzel, House Wren, Catbird, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Great Horned Owl, Cardinal, Goldfinch and Blue Jay. "Wild Flowers of South Dakota," as photographed by Melvin Wheeler of Sioux Falls, was presented next. Among the blossoms illustrated were Pasque-flower, bloodroot, sand cherry, gumbo lily, columbine, Indian paint brush, penstemon, pond lilies, gay feather, goldenrod and cattails.

"Birds Through Pictures" was presented by the water-color artist, C. G. Pritchard of the Nebraska Game, Forestation and Parks Commission. He gave a brief summary of opportunities and experiences which led him to specialize in painting birds, and described the detailed work involved in producing a picture. A number of his paintings were on display during the day.

The program was concluded with the showing of the color-film, "Wild-life at LaCreek Refuge," by Kenneth Krumm of Martin, South Dakota.

Each state adjourned for separate business meetings. Dr. Kozicky called the Iowa group to order. The Secy.-Treasurer's report was read and approved, with a balance of \$1074.85 reported in the treasury. Dr. Kozicky appointed the following committees: Auditing: Miss C. Esther Copp, Mrs. Robert Ruegnitz, Miss Gertrude Weaver; Nominating: Dr. J. H. Ennis, A. C. Berkowitz, Mrs. D. M. Hanna; Resolutions, Dr. M. L. Grant, J. P. Moore.

(Continued on page 38)





BRUCE F. STILES

The new President of Iowa Ornithologists' Union heads the Iowa Conservation Commission and is nationally known in conservation circles. He was first employed by the State Conservation Commission in 1938 as a conservation officer in charge of Mills and Pottawattamie Counties. In 1942 he was appointed Chief of Fish and Game, and Assistant Director of the Commission in 1946. He rose to his present position as Director in 1948. Mr. Stiles served as chairman of one of technical sessions of the 1948 North American Wildlife Conference, has been President of the Midwest Association of Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers, and has been a member of the Executive Committee of the Iowa Academy of Science.

### A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT STILES

I want to take this opportunity to thank the membership of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union for the expression of confidence in electing me President for this year. I deem it a high honor and a privilege to serve in that capacity.

I assure you all of my sincere desire to carry on the traditions of the Union, and to make every effort to be of service to the membership and to advance those things for which the organization stands.

Sincerely,

BRUCE F. STILES

Miss Lillian Serbousek. Dr. Ennis reported on the action taken by the committee on last year's resolution concerning the status of the Mourning Dove in Iowa. A limited supply of check-lists being available, the decision of reprinting or revising the list was left to the incoming officers. Dr. M. L. Grant made a motion that an honorary \$100 be given to Mr. Pierce for editing "Iowa Bird Life." Motion carried unanimously. Dr. Ennis reported that the library's stock of early "Iowa Bird Life" issues is almost depleted. He requested members to turn in any available back issues. Dennis Carter invited the Union to Webster City for the fall meeting. Meeting adjourned.

The annual banquet was served at the hotel at 7 p.m. Dr. Kozicky introduced the guests among whom were Walt L. Muhlbach, the field representative of the Nature Conservancy, Washington D. C., and Alden J. Erskine, president of the Iowa Izaak Walton League, Sioux City. Dr. Kozicky announced that the Brown's Lake area near Sioux City had been named the Stephens-Lee Wildlife Area as a memorial to Dr. T. C. Stephens and Miss Zell C. Lee. There were six people among the contestants who identified correctly three untaged sparrow skins a part of a large number of bird skins on display through the courtesy of W. R. Felton, Jr. of Jefferson, South Dakota. Dr. Kozicky, in behalf of the Union, presented a painting of the Red-bellied Woodpecker by Maynard Reece to Fred Pierce, in appreciation of his 25 years of faithful service as editor of our publication. A. C. Berkowitz was instrumental in making arrangements for the presentation.

Speaker for the evening, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, president of Wildlife Management Institute, Washington, D. C., was then introduced. He gave first-hand information concerning the conflicting struggle waged between those individuals and groups who wish to keep our national recreational areas intact, and those who are willing to destroy, for selfish reasons, the beauty of our country. Some of the national areas to be invaded if controls are eased are the Lower Souris Refuge in North Dakota, Glacier National Park, King's Canyon, Olympic National Park, and the Grand Canyon. Dr. Gabrielson stated that only through the persistent efforts and vigilance of a conservative public can these areas be saved from destruction.

Sunday morning breakfast was served at Bamboo Inn at 4:30 a.m. Five field trips were scheduled with a choice of starting time, 5 or 7 a.m.: 1) Nebraska, 2) South Dakota, 3) Sioux City Scenic, 4) Circle, beyond Sioux City, 5) South to the Missouri "bottoms." The groups returned to the Stone Park shelter house for one o'clock luncheon. A short business meeting followed, each state conducting its own. The combined bird count totaled 124 species. Dr. Ennis submitted the report of the Nominating Committee (new officers as given on the title page of this issue). They were elected by unanimous ballot cast by the Secretary upon motion of the voting members. Miss Copp gave the report of the Auditing Committee and Dr. Grant read the report of the Resolutions Committee. A most enjoyable Tri-State convention was then adjourned.

**Resolutions.**—BE IT RESOLVED that thanks be extended to Dr. E. L. Kozicky, W. W. Barrett, Miss Gertrude Weaver with members of the Sioux City Club, the participating organizations from Nebraska and South Dakota, and the Mayfair Hotel staff for their efforts in making our spring visit so enjoyable and memorable.

That the highest honors be given to the officers of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union for their faithful services during the past year. Among the numerous duties executed by the officers we would like to single out Dr. Kozicky for planning and presiding at the convention; Woodward Brown for his completion and publication of the Iowa Distributional Check-List; Mrs. Crossley for her efficient bookkeeping and handling of the Union's secretarial duties; Mr. Pierce for his 25 years of faithful service in publishing Iowa Bird Life;

and Dr. Ennis for maintaining a fine library and for his work in the defense of the Mourning Dove.

That our thanks be extended to Maynard Reece for the donation of his painting in honor of our editor.

That our deepest appreciation be expressed to Dr. Pettingill for a most interesting report on the Disney filming expedition in the Falkland Islands; to Dr. Gabrielson for the encouragement he has given us by his stimulating interest in maintaining national wildlife and the wilderness areas; to Mr. Pritchard and Mr. Felton for their distinctive exhibits; and to the other speakers for their participation in our program.

Dr. Martin L. Grant, Chairman  
John Paul Moore  
Lillian Serbousek

**Attendance Register—Iowa**—AMES, Dr. and Mrs. Geo. Hendrickson, Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Johnson, Dr. E. L. Kozicky, Helen F. Smith; CEDAR FALLS, Dr. and Mrs. M. L. Grant; CEDAR RAPIDS, Eleanor Fullerton, Lillian Serbousek, Pauline Wershofen, Myra Willis; CRYSTAL LAKE, Mr. and Mrs. Rush Gabrielson; DAVENPORT, Peter Petersen, Jr.; DES MOINES, Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Berkowitz, Mr. and Mrs. Woodward Brown, Dr. and Mrs. H. R. Peasley, Bruce F. Stiles; DUBUQUE, Mrs. Robt. Ruegnitz, Ival Schuster; FAIRFIELD, Margaret Herdliska; FARLEY, Mr. and Mrs. George Crossley; IOWA CITY, Mrs. John E. Briggs, Dr. and Mrs. Peter Laude; MT. VERNON, David Ennis, Dr. J. H. Ennis; MUSCATINE, Dorothy Marcue; NEWTON, Ronnie Krajnovich, Mr. and Mrs. John Paul Moore; OTTUMWA, Mr. and Mrs. M. E. Stempel; POSTVILLE, A. J. Palas, Fritz Palas; ROCK RAPIDS, Mr. and Mrs. O. S. Thomas; RYAN, Paul Pierce; SIGOURNEY, Mr. and Mrs. Forrest Milliken; SIOUX CITY, Herrold Asmussen, Mrs. Lola Avers, Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Barrett, Bob Bashara, Dick Baker, Ruth Bennett, Mrs. Inez Blackstone, Jim Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Cord, Barbara DeLaney, Enola Downard, Mr. and Mrs. Alden Erskine, Ernest Fielding, Esther Frefert, Mr. and Mrs. Darrell Hanna, Sally Hilger, Mr. and Mrs. Willis Howard, R. D. Hisson, Judy Jensen, Gary Koch, Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Lambert, Joann Manners, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Martin, Bob McMurray, Mrs. Albert Moir, Ethel Murray, Gwen Newcomb, Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy Nydegger, Gladys Palmer, Tillie Prestegard, Mrs. Ruby Rennink, Arlene Rummell, Ruth Sampson, Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Schamp, Alan Schatz, Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Schatz, Dr. and Mrs. J. L. Schott, Dorothy Scott, Carole Taylor, Gertrude Weaver; WATERLOO, Russell Hays, Dr. C. W. Robertson; WEBSTER CITY, Dennis Carter; WHEATLAND, Esther Copp; WINTHROP, F. J. Pierce.

**Nebraska**—ALEXANDRIA, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Chase; BLUE SPRINGS, Mrs. F. J. Patton; CHADRON, Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Blinco; CRETE, Dr. and Mrs. W. F. Rapp, Jr.; FAIRBURY, Mrs. Rose Junker; HASTINGS, W. E. Eigsti, Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Jones, Burton Nelson; KEARNEY, Dr. John Bliese; LINCOLN, Mary Louise Hanson, Mrs. Ruth Fleming, C. G. Pritchard, Mrs. Geo. Spidel; NORTH PLATTE, Doris Gates; OMAHA, Mary Ellsworth, L. O. Horsky; PLAINVIEW, Mrs. Geo. Kirk, Ann Seabury, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Seabury; SUPERIOR, Mr. and Mrs. Earle Lionberger; WAUNETA, Iola Pennington, Ruth Pennington, Wayne Roschewski; WISNER, Mr. and Mrs. John Lueshen.

**South Dakota**—ARMOUR, Mr. and Mrs. Charles P. Crutchett; BROOKINGS, Dr. and Mrs. Gerald B. Spawn; JEFFERSON, Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Felton Jr.; MADISON, Mrs. D. S. Baughman, Ruth Habeger, Philip Rittgers; MARTIN, Kenneth Krumm; MCCOOK LAKE, Judy Daily; PLATTE, Chas. Nash, RAPID CITY, Nathaniel Whitney Jr.; SIOUX FALLS, Mr. and Mrs. H. F. Chapman, Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Findley, Mr. and Mrs. G. L. Goebel, Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Halbritter, Dr. Herbert Krause, Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Wheeler, Mr. and Mrs. John Tuthill; SPRINGFIELD, M. E. Burgi, G. D. Ruby;

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**Other States**—BOULDER, COLORADO, Mrs. A. H. Bivans, Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Richardson; WAYNE, MAINE, Dr. and Mrs. Olin S. Pettingill Jr.; WASHINGTON, D. C., Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Walt L. Mulbach.

Total registered: Iowa 101; Nebraska, 31; South Dakota 35; other, 7. Grand total, 174.

**Birds Seen on the Field Trip, May 15, 1955.**—Pied-billed Grebe, White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue and Green Herons, Am. Egret, Mallard, Gadwall, Baldpate, Pintail, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Shoveller, Wood, Redhead, Canvas-back, and Lesser Scaup Ducks, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed, Marsh and Sparrow Hawks, Bob-white, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sora, Am. Coot, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers, Greater and Lesser Yellow-legs, Pectoral, Baird's, Stilt and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Hudsonian Godwit, Wilson's Phalarope, Forster's, Least and Black Terns, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Ruby-thr. Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Flicker, Red-bellied, Red-headed, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Eastern and Arkansas Kingbirds, Crested and Least Flycatchers, Phoebe, Wood Pewee, Prairie Horned Lark, Tree, Bank, Rough-winged, Barn and Cliff Swallows, Purple Martin, Blue Jay, Crow, Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Mockingbird, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Wood, Olive-backed and Gray-checked Thrushes, Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, Migrant Shrike, Starling, Bell's, Red-eye, Philadelphia and Warbling Vireos, Blue-winged, Tennessee, Yellow, Myrtle, Blackburnian and Wilson's Warblers, Oven-bird, Grinnell's Water-thrush, Northern Yellow-throat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Redstart, Bobolink., Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Yellow-headed and Red-winged Blackbirds, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Bronzed Grackle, Cowbird, Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Pine Siskin, Goldfinch Red-eyed Towhee, English, Savannah, Grasshopper, Vesper, Lark, Chipping, Clay-colored, Field, White-crowned, Lincoln's and Song Sparrows. Total 124.

#### GENERAL NOTES

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron at Ames.**—On the morning of April 16, 1955, an Iowa State College bird-study class of which I was a member found an adult Yellow-crowned Night Heron in Brookside Park at Ames. We first saw this bird when it flew from a tree near the shelter-house in the park. We watched it for about 30 minutes as it perched in trees and in flight. Its blue-gray body and black-and-white head pattern made it easy to identify. Brookside is a city park located on the west banks of Squaw Creek in Ames.—DENNIS L. CARTER, Webster City, Iowa.

**Performing Tufted Titmice.**—In August, 1954, my husband and I visited our son who was stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. While in the state of Kentucky, we drove to Mammoth Cave National Park. Before going through the cave, we had our breakfast in the park. As I was frying bacon, a flock of Tufted Titmice lit in the trees above us. A watermelon was lying on top of the picnic table. The titmice hovered patiently in the trees above us while we ate our bacon and eggs. When I stood up with a knife in my hand to cut the watermelon, down came a titmouse to the table. As the first two slices were handed to my husband and son, it slipped the titmouse and helped himself to a seed. For the next ten minutes we had fun watching the whole flock come down and take seeds from the table and even from our hands. Evidently it was not the first time they had seen watermelons in that park!—MRS. W. C. DE LONG, Lamoni, Iowa.

**Lark Sparrow in Northwest Iowa.**—The Lark Sparrow is not common in this part of South Dakota. On the afternoon of May 19, 1955, I saw two of them one-fourth to one-half mile east of the Sioux River and 6 or 7 miles south of the Minnesota line. One was carrying nesting material down into the grass of a meadow and the other was sitting on a fencepost near by.—J. S. FINDLEY, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

**Water Birds at Sweet Marsh.**—On a trip to this state-owned area near Tripoli, Bremer County, on April 3, 1955, I made the following list: Pied-billed Grebe, 8; Great Blue Heron, 2; Mallard, 150; Gadwall, 2; Pintail, 20; Green-winged Teal, 4; Blue-winged Teal, 15; Baldpate, 10; Redhead, 20; Ring-necked Duck, 4; Canvas-back, 1; Lesser Scaup, 70; American Golden-eye, 7; American Merganser, 2; Coot, 20; Killdeer, 1; Ring-billed Gull, 4.—RUSSELL M. HAYS, Waterloo, Iowa.

**Blue Grosbeak Records.**—I was interested in the note on Blue Grosbeaks by Dr. Martin L. Grant in the March issue of "Iowa Bird Life" because I have been collecting the records for South Dakota. I have seen the bird on both sides of the Sioux River a little farther north than your records show. My farthest north record actually in Iowa was about at the Lyon County line, southeast of Canton, South Dakota (one male May 25, 1952; one female June 8, 1952). I have seen a pair on the South Dakota side of the river less than a mile from Iowa and about 3 miles south of the Minnesota line (August 8, 1954). We have records here in Sioux Falls, too, so perhaps you can expect them in suitable habitat in the extreme north-west part of Iowa.—J. S. FINDLEY, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

**Bird Study in the Waterloo Region.**—On April 2, 1955, I had an amusing experience with Blue Jays. On Fletcher Avenue I heard the bell note of a jay then several more. Looking up I saw eight Blue Jays high in a tree; they were in a row about 2 feet apart, at slightly different levels. As I watched, one jay after another jerked its head violently and I heard the bell note. The barbershop octette kept this up for some time and an entertaining act it was. I laughed as each jay jerked its head right on down the line. I had never before seen or heard more than one jay in the act of bellling.

On April 3 I saw a Bewick's Wren in the city. I heard the loud, clear song coming from high in a tree over a block away, and I investigated. When the bird flew down near the ground and began bustling around a home, I obtained a good look at it. I found a dead Bewick's Wren in our alley two years ago and saw one in my yard last year (April 5, 1954).

While making my usual rounds of Black Hawk Creek on April 7, I was exploring a large growth of willows. I turned to look for a singing bird and there in line with my eyes, not 10 feet away, sat a beautiful Barred Owl. I stared at him in amazement and he looked at me for a few seconds then flew to a tree 30 feet away. There were several small birds in the tree but they paid no attention to the owl.

I recorded my first Pine Siskin on May 5, this also in the Black Hawk Creek area. I had been watching a Yellow Warbler, my first for the season, in a small tree in the open woods. A male Goldfinch darted to the ground from another tree, and near the place it had left I saw a small streaked bird sitting in bright sunlight. I studied it carefully at a distance of 10 feet and had no trouble in identifying it as a Pine Siskin, with its small size, streaked plumage, and light-colored wing bars. It soon flew off in company with the Goldfinch.—RUSSELL M. HAYS, Waterloo, Iowa.

**Winter Records from the Webster City Region.**—During January and February, 1955, I obtained the following winter records in the Webster City locality. On January 15, a single Wilson's Snipe was seen along an open stream near the Boone River south of Webster City. On January 29, a flock

of 12 Common Redpolls and 6 Lapland Longspurs were seen along roadsides northwest of the city. On January 30, in a brushy and weedy area on the east side of the Boone River, about 5½ miles south of the city, I found one Field, one Swamp and one Lincoln's Sparrow; on February 13, the Swamp and Lincoln's Sparrows were again seen in that locality, as well as some 13 Song Sparrows.—DENNIS L. CARTER, Webster City, Iowa.

**Chimney Swift Notes from Brazil.**—I read Althea Sherman's book, "Birds of an Iowa Dooryard," and was very much interested in her chapter on the Chimney Swift. We have a Chimney Swift in Brazil, the *Chaetura andrei*, and it behaves very much like *Chaetura pelagica*. It is little known as yet because in Brazil the study of nature is still in its infancy. Every year a number of swiftlets fall from their nest and die because we don't know how to bring them up. Do you perhaps know of anyone who brings them up successfully?

Mr. Moeri-Rufer, of St. Imier, Switzerland, raises hundreds of them and wrote me exactly how to do it. He feeds only fresh ant larvae. We don't have suitable ant larvae for the purpose. A substitute would be white ants, also mealworms. White ants (termites) are hard to get in sufficient quantity where I live. Mealworms are in the beetle phase when they would be required, that is in January. After several fruitless attempts in previous years, I managed to raise three swiftlets this year, feeding them mostly cottage cheese with additions of dried ant eggs, termites, flies, earthworms, flying ants and other insects. But it is very trying, for they must be fed every hour. Often I don't know where to turn for suitable food. I am sure they did not get what was most suitable for them. In nature they eat only live insects, especially flying ants. I believe that mealworms do quite well. I wonder how I shall go about getting thousands of mealworms ready by the time I need them. One swift gets 14 meals a day, three to five mealworms each time, according to their size.—MRS. A. ABENDROTH, Rua Carmela Dutra 181, Teresopolis, Brazil, April 2, 1955.

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#### RECENT BIRD BOOKS

AN INTRODUCTION TO ORNITHOLOGY, by George J. Wallace (Macmillan Co., New York, 1955; cloth, 8vo, pp. i-xii+1-443, with 180 illus.; price, Trade edition, \$8.00; Students' edition \$6.00).

The literature devoted to ornithology and to the popular sport of bird watching has had a very prolific growth in the past decade. The bird student is often at a loss to choose, from a lengthy and imposing list, the one or more good books that he may wish to acquire for his particular field of interest.

In this new book, Dr. Wallace gives a fine introductory coverage of the entire field of ornithology and bird watching. It is a book that the beginner and well advanced bird student will read eagerly, while many an older, seasoned ornithologist will be glad to go over the ground again through Dr. Wallace's well organized outline and entertaining descriptions.

Twelve main chapters constitute the text, which was designed to fit a 12-weeks' term of school. There are four supplementary chapters for schools which will use the book on a semester basis. The preface states that the book was aimed at a somewhat elementary treatment, intended primarily for students with a year or less of college biology. Certainly its use will not be restricted to schools and scholastic studies. It can be profitably used by a wide range of students, both in and out of school.

Chapter 1 takes up "The History and Current Status of Bird Study," beginning with the historical background and proceeding to the modern bird watcher, with a discussion of the opportunities available for making birds

a life work. Chapter 2 gives a preliminary sketch of the bird, its origin, classification and distribution. Chapters 3, 4, 5 describe the features of birds, external and internal, and their functions and adaptations. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are devoted to the annual cycle—arrival, territory, courtship, mating, song, nest, eggs, incubation, hatching, and postnatal life. The next four chapters cover migration, distribution, food habits and economic relations, conservation and management. The final chapters, 13 through 16, take up the subjects of classification and nomenclature; the fossil record; ornithological methods (including field and laboratory studies, and bird-banding); ornithological organizations and their journals. A well selected list of bibliographical references at the end of each chapter will guide the reader to further literature on that particular subject.

It is a very readable book, written in popular, non-technical language. There is no attempt to describe the species of birds or to give information on field identifications, since field guides for this purpose are within reach of everyone. The illustrations, all in black and white, mostly from photographs but including numerous line drawings, are unusually good and show careful selection.

Our brief review describes the book in only a very superficial way. We hope that many of our readers will avail themselves of the excellent information this new publication contains.—F. J. P.

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**THE WREN**, by Edward A. Armstrong (Collins, publishers, London; distributed in U.S. by Macmillan Company, New York, 1955; cloth, 8vo, pp. i-viii+1-312, with 20 photographs & 41 drawings, diagrams; price in U. S., \$6.00).

This book comes from England, where bird books are written and published in large numbers and where the number of bird watchers seems to be unusually high. It is from the pen of a distinguished ornithologist who has written much on birds. The publishers are engaged in bringing out a series of monographic studies of which this book is a part. Other books in the series have included life-history studies of the Redstart, the Yellow Wagtail, the Fulmar, and the Herring Gull.

Mr. Armstrong's study of the wren was begun in war-torn England in 1943. The main area of observation was in the suburbs of Cambridge, in a wooded tract of 4 acres maintained as a sanctuary for wildlife. Nesting-boxes were provided for wrens, and an electrical device for recording activities at the nest was put into use. Observation slits in nest-boxes allowed a close watch of the feeding of the young. Daily records were expanded into 12 notebooks, while adult wrens were trapped at entrances to the boxes and marked with colored celluloid rings.

The early chapters of the book give a general outline of the status of the wren in the avian world—distribution, habitat, migration, dispersal, and homing. Then the author gets into his own studies of the European wren, but including the results of work done on the wren species by other scientists. There are lengthy descriptions of behavior and feeding habits, territorial boundaries in nesting, polygamy, songs and calls, species recognition, and sexual display. A long chapter on nest-building brings out the fact that the Old World wren uses as many unusual situations for nests (such as cabbage-heads, pockets of coats, even in a human skull) as do North American wrens. The relationship between temperature and incubation is described in a 20-page chapter on incubation. The care of nestlings and their development occupies another 35 pages. These studies are based on the author's countless hours of patient observation and meticulous record-keeping.

The chapter on predation of the wren by enemies will be especially interesting to Americans who have been taught, by the late Althea Sherman and others, that the wren in this country is very destructive to the nests and

eggs of other birds. Mr. Armstrong writes that the wren is occasionally killed by raptorial birds, and jays and magpies plunder their nests. The European cuckoo lays its eggs in wrens' nests, and it is stated that wrens deserted their nest in 21 instances out of 44 in which the intruder's egg was placed in the nest. Wrens were frequently victims of mammalian predators, with house cats taking a heavy toll.

Observations on the roosting habits of wrens were made at great length and in detail. The chapter on "Arising and Roosting" covers 28 pages. The book is closely printed on narrow-margined pages. A great amount of information is thus compressed into 284 text pages. It is a very interesting and complete study of the wren—much of it on a comparative basis, for many comparisons are made between the behavior of the wren and other avian species.—F. J. P.

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**THE BIRD BOOK: A PICTURE ALBUM OF AMERICAN BIRDS**, by Leon Augustus Hausman (Arco Publishing Co., New York, 1955; hard cover, 8vo. pp. 1-159, with 16 colored plates & 362 text illus.; price, \$2.50).

The jacket of this book states that "Americans have been relatively slow to embrace the sport of bird watching, mainly because they have never had an adequate, inexpensive guide book to bird life. Here is that book." A great many people will not agree with this statement in reverse. Actually, the thousands of bird watchers who have been rapidly embracing the sport in recent years, have created a market for just this sort of book.

It is primarily a picture book, with two or three illustrations on every page and a special section of 16 John James Audubon prints in color. The pictures are from photographs and drawings, all reproduced in rotogravure. They represent the work of Cruickshank, Peterson, Harrison, Grimes and many others, the greater portion apparently having been furnished by the National Audubon Society.

There are 362 birds illustrated. Accompanying each picture is a description of the bird and its habits, in 150 to 300 words, by Dr. Hausman. There are many fine examples of bird photography and the sketches are interesting reading, but the book will not be very useful to a beginner bird student. Photographs do not usually show field marks and identification points, and in this book there is no scale of sizes. For example, on one page there is a drawing of a hummingbird and a kingfisher, with the hummingbird nearly twice as large.

It is a fine little picture album, and as such it will be thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who picks it up.—F. J. P.

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**ATTRACTING BIRDS TO YOUR BACKYARD**, by William J. Beecher (All-Pets Books, Inc., Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, 1955; paper wrappers, 12 mo. pp. 1-63, with numerous drawings; price \$1.00).

We like this little book very much. Its theme is an old one, of course, but Dr. Beecher goes over the subject again in a refreshing way, describing the likes of suburban birds and telling much about their lives and where they like to nest. The bad habits of Blue Jays, Starlings and Grackles are discussed along with the desirable residents.

The chapter heads describe the contents quite well: Backyard Improvement, Food and Shelter, Speaking of Birds, Attracting Birds in a Subdivision, Suburban Birds, Attracting Birds to City Backyards, Luring Park Birds, Attracting Birds in Winter, Other Books on Birds.

The section on feeding winter birds will be especially interesting to Iowa readers, many of whom maintain winter feeding stations for contact with their bird friends during the cold season. The drawings by the author are very good and fit the text perfectly.—F. J. P.